COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

DIGEST

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Baltic leaders testify before Commission

Pressure from the United States and other Western democracies is needed to prod the Soviet Union into meaningful independence negotiations with Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, leaders of the Baltic States told members of the Helsinki Commission at a recent hearing.

During their testimony before the Commission, Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis, Latvian Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis and Estonian Prime Minister Edgar Savisaar expressed deep concern and frustration over continued attempts by the central Soviet Government—including the ongoing use of violence—to stall negotiations and thwart Baltic independence.

Discussions on the independence question between the Baltic Governments and Moscow began nearly one year ago, but little has been accomplished. So far, the discussions have been only "negotiations about negotiations."

The Baltic leaders agreed during the hearing that international forums, such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), would be among the most effective means to apply pressure on Moscow to begin meaningful negotiations.

"We would like to see the CSCE raise the question of Baltic observer status, raised not just by the small Nordic countries, but also by the United States of America," President Landsbergis said.

Chairman Steny Hoyer (D-MD), who met with President Landsbergis, Prime Minister Godmanis, and Estonian President Arnold Ruutel during a recent trip to the Baltic States, told the leaders that the Commission supports observer status for the Baltic States "as a forerunner for full membership in the CSCE process."

"I am fully convinced that only through the active encouragement of Western nations will the Soviet Government be convinced to approach the negotiating table," Prime Minister Savisaar told the Commission. "I believe that it is only when the Soviet Union understands that it is going to find itself in international isolation concerning the Baltic question, only then will its position change."

Prime Minister Godmanis said that if and when real negotiations begin, only direct meetings between President Gorbachev and the Baltic presidents can produce meaningful and lasting results. He also urged, along with his counterparts, that the United States establish information offices in the Baltic States in order to gather first-hand information, and avoid being given "misinformation" by the central government.

Grain credits discussed

In response to a question by Co-Chairman Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ) during the hearing, President Landsbergis and Prime Minister Savisaar argued that no further U.S. agriculture credits, which President Gorbachev has requested, should go to the Soviet Government until progress is made on the issue of Baltic independence.

From left: Latvian Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis, Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis, a translator, and Estonian Prime Minister Edgar Savisaar testify on May 7 before the Helsinki Commission.

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe by law monitors and encourages progress in implementing the provisions of the Helsinki human rights accords. The Commission, created in 1976, is made up of nine Senators, nine Representatives and one official each from the Departments of State, Commerce and Defense.

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The Helsinki Commission hosted a reception in Statuary Hall for the Baltic leaders on the day of the hearing.

Prime Minister Godmanis told the Commission that Latvia is in desperate need of grain, but that aid should be granted only if it goes directly to the Baltic States and Soviet republics. And if more violence occurs, he added, "all trade should be stopped."

Prime Minister Savisaar said that without direct aid, the grain would either be lost in the highly inefficient Soviet distribution system, or used as a political tool against the Baltic States.

"The highly centralized system in the Soviet Union has shown that you can put as much aid into it as is possible, but that it all gets lost," he said.

Frustration of leaders evident

During his opening statement, President Landsbergis spoke emotionally of the ongoing Soviet military presence in Lithuania, and accused the government of "outright robbery."

"It is a policy or behavior that the Soviet Government allows its soldiers and its state officials, and against which we Lithuanians can defend ourselves only by limited means," the President said. "They steal everything, robbing our people of their personal possessions as well as their country."

Attending the hearing along with Chairman Hoyer and Co-Chairman DeConcini from the Commission were Senators Alfonse D'Amato (R–NY) and Frank Lautenberg (D–NJ), and Representatives Don Ritter (R–PA), Edward Markey (D–MA), Bill Richardson (D–NM), and Christopher Smith (R–NJ). Other Members in attendance were Representatives Albert Bustamante (D–TX), Ben Cardin (D–MD), Richard Durbin (D–IL), Dennis Hertel (D–MI), John Miller (R–WA), Bill Sarpalius (D–TX), and Craig Thomas (R–WY).

—James Ridge

Editors note: *On May 15, 1 week after the Baltic hearing, Co-Chairman DeConcini and Sen. Bill Bradley (D–NJ) led the fight against a resolution which urges President Bush to extend $1.5 billion in further grain credits to the Soviet Union. The resolution passed the Senate by a 70–28 vote, but Moscow's bad credit rating has kept the President from issuing the new credits thus far.*

Commission meets with Shevardnadze

Unless a sense of social order in the Soviet Union is established soon, civil war, anarchy and chaos could destabilize that country, former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze told members of the Helsinki Commission during a private briefing on May 7.

Shevardnadze, who recently established a private think tank which focuses on security and foreign policy issues, stressed the need to maintain stability in the USSR particularly during this turbulent period which, he claimed, could lead to the emergence of a dictatorship. He voiced concern over the possibility of Soviet nuclear weapons falling into the hands of a dictator or others if anarchy were to break out.

Citing the April 23 agreement between Moscow and nine republics to work out a new union treaty, Shevardnadze predicted that the Union would be maintained, albeit with a smaller center. While acknowledging the constitutional right of republics to secede, he emphasized the present economic interdependence of the republics.

Shevardnadze said that dialogue between the center and the Baltic States and independence-minded republics was essential, and decried the use of force in the Baltics.

He said he was heartened by recent steps toward unifying democratic elements within the Soviet Union, but acknowledged that the reform process, instituted under Gorbachev, should have been launched earlier.

Shevardnadze, whose visit coincided with the opening of debate in Congress on U.S. assistance to the USSR, said that any assistance from the U.S.—moral, political, and psychological—would be welcomed and could enhance the position of Soviet reformers. He also called for regular summit meetings between the United States and Soviet Union and further progress in arms control, trade and exchanges, and contacts at all levels.

—Ron McNamara

Soviet emigration proposal has several flaws

After reviewing a proposed Soviet emigration law which has been made a precondition by the Bush administration for granting the Soviet Union Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status, Chairman Hoyer and Co-Chairman DeConcini said the legislation contains several deficiencies. The Soviet Parliament approved the legislation on May 20.

Hoyer and DeConcini said that while the proposal represents "a significant improvement" over existing Soviet law, several of its sections "fall short of internationally recognized standards, including those of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on freedom of movement."

Most notable, the Chairman and Co-Chairman said, are sections of the legislation pertaining to "state secrets," personal financial obligations and military service.

Under the current proposal, which has not yet been signed into law, the Soviet Government could deny exit visas for up to 5 years to individuals who possess "state secrets." While the legislation states that "the limit should not exceed 5 years," it would allow a commission under the Soviet Cabinet of Ministers to extend the period of visa denial. Individuals attempting to appeal their visa denial could do so only every 3 years.

"The Soviets have used inconsistent standards and a broad definition of 'state secrets' to extend periods of visa denial in the past," Hoyer said. "That injustice could continue under the proposed law."

The chairmen also said the state secrets clause should be retroactive for those persons who have already been denied the right to emigrate for a period longer than 5 years. The planned implementation date for the new emigration law is January 1, 1993.

Hoyer and DeConcini are also concerned about a section which requires those persons eligible for military service (from age 16-28) to serve their military term before being allowed to emigrate. According to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ), "Soviet citizens are routinely denied permission to emigrate on secrecy grounds after military service because they served in a place considered to be 'secret.' Citizens have no control over where they are sent for military service."

The legislation would also continue the Soviet practice of requiring persons applying to emigrate to produce an affidavit stating that they owe no outstanding financial obligations to their parents or ex-spouse. According to UCSJ, in the absence of signed affidavits the decision may be appealed, but the process of appeal is not mentioned in the new law.

—James Ridge

Commission leadership urges information exchange on arms

Chairman Hoyer and Co-Chairman DeConcini have written to President Bush urging the United States to forward a proposal on arms sales at the on-going negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) in Vienna.

The Commission leaders drafted an information exchange proposal in the aftermath of the Gulf war in an attempt to enhance public scrutiny surrounding the multi-billion dollar arms trade. They stressed the importance of the proposal in light of the secrecy surrounding such transfers.

Hoyer and DeConcini noted that 9 of the top 10 conventional arms selling countries are members of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, making it a logical place to advance such a proposal. The United States was the second largest conventional arms selling country, after the Soviet Union, according to statistics for the period from 1985-89.

The proposal would require signatory States to exchange information, on an annual basis, of their sales of certain major conventional weapons and equipment systems. These include battle tanks, artillery, missiles, and chemical and biological weapons.

"The CSCE provides a logical forum for the countries of Europe and North America to take a first step toward greater disclosure of the international arms trade," they observed.

THE TOP 10

1. Soviet Union, 2. United States, 3. France, 4. United Kingdom, 5. China, 6. Germany, 7. Czechoslovakia, 8. Italy, 9. Sweden, 10. Netherlands.

Information on arms transfers would, under the plan, be discussed at the newly created CSCE Conflict Prevention Center in Vienna. Participating States are already required to provide annual information on military budgets, exercise activities, weapons deployments, military forces, and equipment.

Hoyer and DeConcini called the proposal a first step toward obtaining a more accurate picture of the extent and impact of the arms trade through more complete and accurate information on its dimensions.

"We feel that the United States, as a key actor, should exercise leadership in seeking steps toward a more responsible approach to the trade," they wrote in their letter to the President. Introduction of the proposal "would signal that the United States is ready to address an issue which has broad implications for peace and stability throughout the world" they concluded.

—Ron McNamara

FOR THE RECORD

IVARS GODMANIS, Prime Minister of Latvia, during a Helsinki Commission hearing, May 7, 1991. "The people of the Baltic States have always looked to the democratic nations of the world with admiration and hope. You have an historic opportunity to not disappoint these hopes, and to prevent a reoccurence of the tragic events of January 1991."

SALI BERISHA, Chairman of the Democratic Party of Albania, during a Helsinki Commission hearing, May 22, 1991. "From the very beginning, we rejected the draft constitution prepared by a commission appointed by the Communist Party. Our parliamentary group prepared a package of 13 laws, all taken from the Helsinki agreements on human rights, the rule of law, and market economy."

INNA YEFREMOVA, resident of Magnitogorsk, USSR, May 1991. "I'd like to live in a country where you walk into a store and you can buy an orange or a banana. I've seen those things twice. I'd like to live in a place where my children don't resent me for living where we do."

GERMAN STERLIGOV, Soviet businessman, Moscow, May, 1991. "I could buy a house or a ship or a plane. But what would be the use? Gorbachev would issue a ukase (order) and it would all be taken. Nobody knows what will be allowed tomorrow."

LJUBICA GLAVURTIC, a receptionist in Croatia, on the prospect for further violence between Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia, May 1991. "I'm so afraid. My suitcase is already packed, so when the fighting starts I'll be off to Vienna."

STEVEN BURG, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Brandeis University, on Yugoslavia, May 1991. "It would be nice if we and our West European allies could make it convincingly clear that we will not support states that resolve their problems through violence and repression of minority groups."

RECENT CSCE PUBLICATIONS

THE ELECTIONS IN ALBANIA—On-site Helsinki Commission staff report on Albania's first multi-party elections since the 1920's, with an introduction. 32 pages.

SOVIET AND BALTIC ELECTION REPORT—Single volume compilation of on-site Commission staff reports on parliamentary elections in the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and the Soviet Republics of Russia, Moldavia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, with an introduction. 188 pages.

REPORT ON THE ESTONIAN REFERENDUM AND LATVIAN PUBLIC OPINION POLL ON INDEPENDENCE—On-site Commission staff report on the March 3, 1991, votes on independence in Estonia and Latvia, with an introduction. 5 pages.

CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN ELECTION REPORTS—Single volume compilation of on-site Commission staff reports on the 1990 elections held in the GDR, Hungary, the Yugoslav Republics of Slovenia and Croatia, Romania, the Czech and Slovak Republic, and Bulgaria, with an introduction. 157 pages.

COMMISSION TRIP TO HUNGARY, YUGOSLAVIA AND ALBANIA—Report on the Helsinki Commission's March fact-finding trip to Hungary, Yugoslavia and Albania. 37 pages.

COMMISSION TRIP TO THE BALTIC STATES AND MOSCOW—Report on the Helsinki Commission's February fact-finding trip to Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Moscow. 35 pages.

STAFF REPORT ON HOMELESSNESS—August 29, 1990. Examines the causes, responses, and symptoms associated with the growing homelessness problem in the United States, and examines the problem in relation to international human rights commitments. The report is part of the Commission's continuing review of U.S. efforts to meet Helsinki process commitments. 77 pages.

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IN EUROPE
Congress of the United States
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

Official Business

M.C.

Hearing focuses on recent events in Albania

On May 22, the Helsinki Commission held a public hearing on recent events in Albania and the prospects for the building of democracy in that country, which held its first free elections in over 60 years on March 31, 1991. The hearing was held in light of Albania's interest in joining the Helsinki process. Albania was the only European country which chose not to participate in the CSCE when it was first established in the early 1970's.

Two prominent Albanians testified at the hearing, whom Commission Co-Chairman DeConcini introduced as "impressive for their insights regarding developments in Albania, and admirable for their advocacy of democratic reforms."

Democratic leader testifies

The first was Sali Berisha, Chairman of the Democratic Party of Albania, which was formed immediately after a December 1990 decision by the Albanian authorities to permit alternative political parties. It is Albania's leading opposition party, winning 75 of 250 seats in the Albanian Assembly. Dr. Berisha was accompanied by Azem Hajdari, a student activist and fellow member of the Democratic Party leadership. Both are delegates to the Assembly.

The second witness was Ismail Kadare, Albania's greatest novelist and best known intellectual. he was the first prominent Albanian to express criticism of the country's Communist regime and its policies. During a visit to France in October 1990, Kadare decided not to return to Albania out of frustration with the lack of progress in the development of democratic reforms. His subsequent writing has been severely critical of the Albanian Government.

Legacy of isolation

Both witnesses described the difficulties Albania is trying to overcome in order to be a democracy and a participant in European affairs. While a democratic political system existed in the 1920's, for most of its history Albania has been ruled by foreign powers. In addition, the post-War Communist regime of Enver Hoxha, who was succeeded in 1985 by Ramiz Alia, was the most brutal in Eastern Europe and isolated the country from the rest of the world.

Democracy is 'irreversible'

As a result, democratic change started later in Albania than elsewhere. Kadare said that the Helsinki process played a major role "in the reawakening of Albania." Berisha attributed the reforms which culminated in the March 31 elections to "strong domestic pressure and foreign democratic opinion," including "the spirit of Helsinki; developments in Eastern Europe; the rise to power of Mikhail Gorbachev; dissent by the Albanian intelligentsia . . . and labor revolts." Despite a flawed election process and the violent break-up of post-election demonstrations, Berisha concluded that "democratic processes in Albania are irreversible." Kadare agreed, adding that normalization of Albania's political system favors the democratic opposition and that, while still formally in power, the Communists in fact "have lost everything."

Both Berisha and Kadare said that Albanians have placed their hopes on the United States during this critical time. Berisha stressed the need for humanitarian aid and technical assistance, especially regarding constitutional law and legislative processes. He also called for opening a U.S. Embassy in Tirana soon. Azem Hajdari added that Voice of America broadcasts have been vital in getting information to the Albanian people.

On CSCE, Berisha, Kadare, and Hajdari stated that, at this crucial stage in the country's transition, Albania's request for full membership in the process should be supported as a way to increase pressure for democratization. Kadare added that, in light of developments in Albania, this membership should not be considered to be assistance to the Communists and that it would not be interpreted that way by the people of Albania.

—Bob Hand

From left: Albanian novelist Ismail Kadare and Democratic leader Dr. Sali Berisha testify before the Commission.

Briefing marks 5th anniversary of Chernobyl

The consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and its aftermath are overwhelming and have caught many people by surprise because of efforts by the Soviet Government to cover up the incident, according to a leading expert on the subject who spoke at a recent Helsinki Commission briefing.

The briefing, "Chernobyl: Five Years After," was held on April 26, the 5th anniversary of the disaster, and featured Chernobyl expert David Marples, Director of the Program for Study of Contemporary Ukraine, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies and Associate Professor of Soviet History at the University of Alberta. Dr. Natalia Preobrazhenska, a leading environmental activist from Kiev and Professor of the Institute of Microbiology at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, also participated in the briefing.

According to Dr. Marples, many unknowns remain about how to effectively decontaminate the damaged number four reactor as well as surrounding areas. And despite the continued risks of operating the remaining reactors, the Soviet Ministry of Atomic Energy and Industry is opposing the Ukrainian Government's plan to completely shut down the power plant by 1995.

At the recent Euro-Chernobyl II conference in Kiev which Dr. Marples attended prior to his visit to Washington, new information surfaced about the impact of the disaster on the health of the surrounding population. As a result of the considerable radioactive fallout from the accident, a sharp increase in maladies has been recorded, especially among children whose immune systems are not fully developed.

Dr. Marples cited recent reports by the Ukrainian Institute of Gynecology at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences indicating a decrease last year in reproductivity, an increase in deformations, and misbalances in the endocrinological systems of pregnant women. According to Dr. Marples, 4 million people today, mostly in Byelorussia and Ukraine, live in zones of high radiation fallout.

Dr. Marples also addressed the political ramifications of the Chernobyl disaster, especially with respect to the continuing struggle between the center and the republics. He said that while the republics most directly affected by Chernobyl—Byelorussia and Ukraine—are playing an increasing role in remedying its aftereffects, they currently lack the authority to implement their policy decisions.

"The biggest single problem for the Ukrainians is that they simply do not yet have political control over the territory being examined," Dr. Marples said.

Dr. Marples concluded that the future with respect to the disaster will depend on two factors: international help and the political situation. He observed that the feeling in Ukraine is unanimous among people of different political persuasion that "we have to take control of our own economies away from Moscow and until we do this . . . then we cannot overcome disasters of the nature of Chernobyl."

—Orest Deychakiwsky

CPC opens for business in Vienna

Mandated to "assist the Council (of Foreign Ministers) in reducing the risk of confict" between CSCE States, the Conflict Prevention Center (CPC) was formally opened in Vienna in March by Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock.

Headed by Bent Rosenthal, a former Danish CSBM negotiator, the Center has been allocated two officers and support staff. It is supervised by a Consultative Committee of representatives from each participating State, which has held four meetings since the Paris summit last November.

The Center, which oversaw the first annual exchange of military information among the 34 participating States on April 15, has the initial task of implementing the Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) which were agreed upon in Vienna last fall.

The CPC's role in considering information exchanged, as well as its mandate to hold an annual review of CSBM implementation, create a regular process of review which Basket I has previously lacked.

The Center also serves as host for seminars on military doctrine (the second of which is planned for October 8–18 of this year), and meetings requested by a State to clarify unusual military activities of another participating State.

The CPC Secretariat will compile information exchanged on military budgets and deployment of weapons as well as on forces, structures and equipment into a CSCE military yearbook. The Center will also have overall responsibility for the communications network being set up among the participating States to explain and resolve potentially hazardous military incidents.

The CPC's mandate does not extend to internal disputes within CSCE States. The United States and some other participating States, particularly the United Kingdom and France, feel that the CPC should restrict its activities to the CSBM sphere for a trial period. Others, however, particularly the new democracies, are eager to see the CPC play a more active role in European security, broadly defined.

Interest in regular meetings of the Consultative Committee and in new areas of endeavor for the CPC, such as verification of arms control agreements and the peaceful settlement of disputes, is growing among those countries which see the CSCE as a potentially important part of their security arrangements.

—Heather Hurlburt

Editors note: *The CSCE Committee of Senior Officials decided May 24 to recommend to the Council of Ministers to locate the new Peaceful Settlement of Disputes Mechanism at the Conflict Prevention Center. The mechanism will broaden the CPC's mandate significantly beyond military matters.*